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SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WEB CHAT WITH DAN WITHMAN

¶1. (U) Post invited six journalists and editors from local newspapers to participate in the web chat dialogue with Dan Whitman on ``Corruption in Africa'' at its Cultural Center Auditorium. Ambassador Cook later joined the group for a one-hour discussion on the detrimental impact of corruption on the Central African Republic's (CAR) development.

¶2. (U) The program was very instructive for the journalists and motivated them vis a vis their role in promoting transparency and making government actors accountable to their constituents.

The Ambassador emphasized the relevance of the web chat's anticorruption message in a country that, despite its rich natural resources, is embroiled in internal conflicts that derail the country's development. He invited the press to be more involve in the sensitization of the population towards corruption and to encourage the people to be more responsible for their development. The journalists were impressed with the Ambassador's frank remarks and recommended that forums of this type be organized more often and involve officials and members of civil society.

¶3. (U) Impact: Very positive. The web chat and following discussion reinforced President Obama's historic speech and gave Post an opportunity to advance US policy in the CAR.

COOK